

REMARKS

This amendment is responsive to the Official Action mailed June 15, 2004. Claims 23-26, 28-33 and 35-40 are pending. Claims 21, 22, 27 and 34 have been canceled, without prejudice.

In the Official Action, claims 21, 22, 25-29, 32-36 and 40 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Rogers et al. (U.S. Pat. No 6,018,719). Claims 23, 24, 30, 31 and 37-39 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over the same Rogers et al., in view of Okamura et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,616,055).

Reconsideration of claims 23-26, 28-33 and 35-40 is respectfully requested. Claim 24 has been rewritten in independent form and includes the subject matter of independent claim 21 and intervening dependent claim 22, which have been canceled without prejudice. Claims 23, 25 and 26 have been amended (or not) such that they depend directly or indirectly from claim 24.

Likewise, claim 31 has been rewritten in independent form and includes the subject matter of independent claim 27, which has been canceled without prejudice. Claims 28-30 and 32-33 have been amended (or not) such that they depend directly or indirectly from claim 31.

Moreover, claim 37 has been rewritten in independent form and includes the subject matter of independent claim 34, which has been canceled without prejudice. Claims 35-36 and 38-40 have been amended (or not) such that they depend directly or indirectly from claim 37.

The foregoing independent claims 24, 31 and 37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over the Rogers et al. in view of Okamura et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,616,055). The reference of Okamura et al. is not prior art against this application. Applicant's priority date is December 30, 1999, which prefigures any date which Okamura et al. might qualify for.

Hence claims 24, 31 and 37, as well as claims 23, 25-26, 28-30, 32-33 35-36 and 38-40 depending therefrom, are allowable in accordance with the disqualification of Okamura et al.

Moreover, allowance of claims is requested because the invention claimed as a whole in each of these claims is neither disclosed nor suggested by the prior art of record, whether considered individually or in any routine combination. Accordingly, allowance of the claims is proper and is hereby respectfully requested.

Every effort has been made to particularly and distinctly define the subject matter of the invention. The claims are definite, and are patentable over the prior art of record. The

differences between the invention and the prior art are such that the subject matter claimed as a whole would not have been known or obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art. Reconsideration, and allowance of all the pending claims, are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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